



# NEWS RELEASE

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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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## **TEN MEMBERS OF BEAUMONT DRUG RING PLEAD GUILTY**

(Beaumont, TX) A cocaine trafficking ring led by a 33-year-old Beaumont man has ended with guilty pleas from ten individuals charged in the Eastern District of Texas. On June 19, 2006, United States Chief Judge Thad Heartfield accepted ten (10) separate guilty pleas to a variety of federal drug trafficking and firearms charges, from ringleader **HOWARD DWAYNE WALKER** and nine other Beaumont men including **RANIKA LASHUN PRINCE, JETAIME JERONE HOLLAND, YONGUE JOHN GROGAN, JANNA NICOLE HELMICH, MARK ANTHONY LANE, DANNY RAY WILLIAMS, JR., JOHN WILLIE CLOUD, JR., JEREMIAH ANDREW BROWN and RONALD RAY GARY.**

Matthew D. Orwig, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas was pleased with outcome, "These ten convictions are a great example of how drug dealers are being taken off the streets. Through the terrific investigative efforts of these law enforcement agencies, drug dealers at every level of this organization were successfully prosecuted in this case. We thank those officers for their efforts in this case and for the hard work they provide everyday to make our communities safer."

According to information presented in court, Walker was obtaining

large quantities of cocaine in Houston, and distributing it in Beaumont and Port Arthur. The six month investigation concluded on June 30, 2005, when federal agents and officers from the Groves, Beaumont and Port Arthur police departments, and Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, arrested Walker after he returned to Beaumont from Houston with possession of 8 kilograms (17.5 lbs) of cocaine. Officers then concluded the six-month investigation by executing a series of search warrants prompting further arrests of Walker's drug ring members.

Walker pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine and "crack" cocaine, and faces a term of imprisonment of not less than ten years and not more than life and a fine of up to \$4 million.

Prince, 27, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute "crack" cocaine and faces a term of imprisonment of ten years to life, and a fine of up to \$4 million.

Holland, 27, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute cocaine and faces a term of not less than 5 years and not more than 40 years, and a fine of up to \$2 million.

Grogan, 29, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute "crack" cocaine and conspiracy to distribute cocaine and faces terms of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and not more than 40 years, and fines of up to \$2 million.

Helmich, 21, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute "crack" cocaine and faces a term of imprisonment of not more than 20 years and a fine of up to \$1 million.

Lane, 48, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute "crack" cocaine and faces a sentence of imprisonment for not less than 5 years and

not more than 40 years, and a fine of up to \$2 million.

Williams, 30, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute cocaine, and faces a term of imprisonment for a term not less than 5 and not more than 40 years, and a fine of up to \$2 million.

Cloud, 32, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute "crack" cocaine, conspiracy to distribute cocaine, and felon in possession of a firearm. Cloud faces terms of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and not more than 40 years and fines of up to \$2 million for the drug trafficking offenses. Cloud also faces a sentence of up to 10 years and a fine of up to \$250,000.00 for the felon in possession of a firearm offense.

Brown, 25, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute "crack" cocaine and faces a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and not more than 40 years, and a fine of up to \$2 million.

Gary, 27, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute "crack" cocaine and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. Gary faces a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and not more than 40 years and a fine of up to \$2 million for the drug offense. Brown faces an additional 5 year term of imprisonment to be served consecutively and a fine of up to \$250,000.00 for the possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking conviction.

After accepting the guilty pleas, Judge Heartfield ordered that presentence reports be prepared and that the defendants be returned to his court at a future date for sentencing.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Groves Police Department, Beaumont Police Department, Port Arthur Police Department, Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and United States Marshal's Service.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Hobbs prosecuted this case.

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